



PS 321

Number 3 2016

# Green and Healthy



## Find Your Green&Healthy Passion

We are very excited to share this newsletter full of passion for all things Green&Healthy. After a successful G&H month filled with valuable lessons from nutrition to sustainability, exciting fieldtrips, a Hip-Hop-dancing Liz Phillips during Green&Healthy Professional Development, and a fabulous Green&Healthy Night, PS 321 students, teachers and staff are doing their best to keep the momentum. Join us at home in embracing Green&Healthy values every day. Spread the word in our community and beyond.

The PS321 Green&Healthy Mission: Instill Everlasting Green & Healthy Values in our kids.

Find your Green&Healthy passion.  
My passion is: Sustainability

## Expert Chat

**G&H chats with Kevin McPhee, PS 321's Parent Sustainability Coordinator, about PS 321's Green Apple Day of Service.**

The Green Apple movement, led by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC)'s 'Center for Green Schools' wants to ensure that every student has the opportunity to attend a green school within this generation and to thrive in healthy, safe and productive learning environments. Last fall, a team of 10 energy experts conducted an energy audit for PS 321.

**G&H:** Kevin, How did you hear about Green Apple Day and what motivated you to engage them in our school?

**KMcP:** I worked for years in chain restaurant real

estate development. When I saw the benefits of sustainability in real estate, I redirected my career path to only work on that. As a member of the USGBC, I've learned about the positive effects of sustainable schools on their students. Graduates are more aware of the environment, more willing to take on green careers, or to transform traditional careers into green careers.

PS 321 is an older building. So I knew I could get my sustainable building colleagues excited to do some great work for our school.

**G&H:** Describe PS 321's Green Apple Day for us.

**KMcP:** The energy experts walked through the school and identified any energy conservation measures that could be taken in order to increase the school's operating efficiency, and decrease the school's greenhouse gas emissions and overall carbon footprint on the planet.

Some of the measures are simple and low-cost, while others are time-consuming and expensive. But all of the measures result in a better building for the occupants and for the planet.

**G&H:** What were the key recommendations?

**KMcP:** The first area an energy expert typically looks at is lighting. Energy conservation is quite easy to identify, and most measures taken pay for themselves in a relatively short amount of time. At PS 321, the lighting needs to be upgraded. A lot of energy can be conserved! LED lights are recommended throughout the school. While the project would come at a significant cost of over \$100K, it would pay for itself in energy savings in less than five years.

The experts also looked at how the building's structure and systems work together to either waste or conserve energy. Several measures can be taken to address the energy loss typical of an older school building. The air flow, an important part of how efficiently a building is heated and cooled, can be improved by addressing several issues that would better balance the systems. And the school's air handling units can be

programmed to better accommodate the building occupancy at different times.

Further, the boiler's efficiency can be improved to save energy. A boiler is the heating brain of the school. It burns oil in order to heat water into steam and the steam heats the school. Steam valves, steam traps, thermostats, draft controls and heating fuel controls are all parts of the heating system and all of these parts can be addressed to contribute to energy conservation.

**G&H:** We spotted a new structure in the school garden after Green Apple Day. What is that about?

**KMcP:** The Green Apple Day team assembled a rain water harvesting barrel. Using nature as the water source for the plants saves municipal water and energy.

**G&H:** What is next?

**KMcP:** I'm happy to say that the wheels are already in motion to upgrade the school's lighting and to also introduce renewable, solar, energy. These are both significant projects in the planning stages, so let's keep our fingers crossed that we're able to make them happen. These projects would have a tremendously positive impact on the school's energy use which would reduce the school's carbon footprint, making the planet...and the taxpayer who pays the utility bills... much happier!

**G&H:** What is your message to PS 321 families? Everyone can do their part at home to live more sustainably. I'm happy to speak with any parents about what they can do at home, or even where they work. One quick fix is the lighting upgrade with LEDs to reduce energy use. It's easy to do, doesn't cost too much, and significantly reduces your energy use and carbon footprint.

If you're excited to help the environment and benefit students, then you can be a Green Apple Day expert too. Everyone is encouraged to volunteer to help a school on the Green Apple Day of Service, so be sure to look for it in September.

**G&H:** Thank you, Kevin.

**Kevin McPhee can be contacted at**  
**kevinmcphee@yahoo.com**

## **My passion is: The PS 321 Salad Bar**

**By Catherine Douglass, Lunchroom and Salad Bar  
Volunteer Coordinator**

The salad bar has made a tremendous impact by providing healthy choices for students at lunch-

time. There are so many children taking advantage of this wonderful option. However, we need your help: There have been MANY days the salad bar is not available from 11am-12pm because we do not have a single volunteer. The kids are disappointed and the food is wasted. Please consider volunteering one hour of your time.

Please contact me, Catherine Douglass, at catheri-neaseward@gmail.com for more information.

## **My passion is: Mindfulness**

**By Karyn Wulwick, Teacher 3-306**

Mindfulness is getting a lot of buzz in the mainstream media. So what is it? Jon Kabbat-Zinn, a leader in the field of mindfulness, defines it as "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally."

Each day in class 3-306, students practice mindfulness. Why? Our lives, school, and classroom are busy, busy, busy; it can be overwhelming. Research shows that practicing mindfulness can improve attention and self-regulation. We've set a regular time in our day to allow children to be quiet, practice conscious breathing and become aware of what's happening in and around them in the present moment. This focused time has great benefits for each of us.

What does mindfulness look like? Students come into the classroom and we all settle into our mindful bodies that are alert and active. We then ring a bell to open our practice and listen until we can't hear it anymore. Next we learn about a topic such as mindful listening or mindful breathing. We practice by sitting quietly for a short amount of time. While this is happening we are breathing in and out, or perhaps listening for the sounds around us. We then share our experiences: students use words like calm, peaceful and focused.

Students report these benefits: "we can calm our bodies," "we can use breathing to help us fall asleep," "we can calm ourselves down before a test." They are also sharing benefits at home, teaching younger siblings, or practicing with their parents before bed by getting quiet, breathing and being together.

Finally, and probably the greatest testament to the value of mindfulness, is when former students and parents come back year after year and share how their experience practicing mindfulness in 3rd grade has made an impact on their life!

Current 4th grader Leonie Schwetlick describes

her experiences: "You close your eyes and you use your ears and nose and your other senses to really notice what is going on around you, but you have no thoughts in your head...it calms you down when you've had a tough day. It is almost like starting your day fresh."

We encourage you to try mindfulness out at home and see how it can enrich your life!

Learn more from about how mindfulness helps students focus and cope with stress in the New York Times article entitled Under Stress, Students in New York Schools Find Calm in Meditation.

## **My passion is: The American Chestnut Tree**

**Maisie Carroll, 3M3, interviewed local resident and Prospect Park volunteer Bart Chezar about his Green&Healthy passion.**

**MC:** Tell me a bit about yourself.

**BC:** I retired from being an R&D (Research and Development) engineer at the New York Power Authority 15 years ago. I was interested in environmental issues, in bringing things that disappeared from NYC back. A disease called blight killed most American Chestnut Trees and I wanted to bring them back.

**MC:** What got you interested in American Chestnut Trees?

**BC:** People were doing this elsewhere and I knew that American Chestnut Trees disappeared a while ago. Also, bringing back American Chestnut Trees helps stop global warming as trees give off oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide.

**MC:** Why do you like planting American Chestnut Trees?

**BC:** To bring them back and so squirrels and other animals can have food. We planted them in Prospect Park, Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn Botanic Gardens, and some other places. We now have 26 trees and we started in 2004.

**MC:** If someone wanted to find a Green&Healthy passion, what advice would you give them?

**BC:** I think you have to do a lot of reading and studying in the library, at school, and at home to find out what you are really interested in and to become an expert.

**MC:** Thank you!

**Maisie:** "After the interview I helped Bart plant some American Chestnut seeds that he had collected from some of his trees in the Sugar Bowl in Prospect Park.

We planted 40 seeds! Right now the trees need lots of care to help them grow, but one day they'll be growing in the parks of Brooklyn."

## **My passion is: Soccer**

**By Victor Popovsky, PE teacher**

I have been playing soccer for over 35 years, professionally and semi-professionally. This sport helped me with many aspects of my life: socially, mentally and physically. Soccer taught me sportsmanship, friendship and respect of others, and allowed me to appreciate a healthy lifestyle. As a child, it helped me stay out of trouble and focus on important things in life, like family, friends and education.

This past winter break, I took part in the 13th Pan American Maccabi games in Santiago, Chile. This international tournament included over 4000 athletes and represented 20 different countries. I was so honored to be a part of this unique celebration of culture and diversity of Jewish people in athletic competition. I was part of the Maccabi USA Masters soccer team, age group of 45 and over. Players from all over the USA came to the tryouts, which took place in six states. A squad of 22 players was carefully selected to represent the Maccabi USA Masters soccer in Santiago, Chile.

Our team played five games against Great Britain, Brazil, Chile and Argentina. We faced Great Britain in the bronze medal round and I was able to score the winning goal, in a penalty kick. This is the first time that the 45 and over age group won the medal in Maccabi Pan American games!

### **Field Trip Report:**

#### **Brooklyn Children's Museum**

**By Owen Batchelor, 4-308**

I think more museums should use more eco-friendly solutions for lights, floors and bathrooms. They should install solar panels on the roof to consume sun energy and then use it for the lights. For the floor part they should use bamboo, because it grows back really fast. In the bathrooms they should use lower bathroom sinks, because kids go to other museums too. This field trip taught me a lot about being green!

**By Robert Kondzior, 4-308**

My class and I went to the Brooklyn Children's Museum to celebrate Green and Healthy Month. This museum is designed to save energy and resources.

At the museum we did a scavenger hunt to find out more about the building and "green" features of it. The amazing thing about the museum is that it uses natural sources like sun and water. I also learned that most of the things are made out of renewable and recyclable materials, like bamboo, cork or rubber. I think it was a perfect idea to go to this museum to celebrate Green and Healthy Month.

## Crayola Color Cycle

Thank you for dropping off a whopping 578 markers (that's 11.5 pounds) during Green&Healthy Month's Crayola ColorCycle Drive, and for helping divert hundreds of tons of markers from landfills and convert them into fuel instead. This was such a success, we decided to keep the initiative going! You can drop off any brand of plastic markers, including dry erase markers and highlighters, in the collection box in PS 321's vestibule from now through the end of the school year.

## Where are we on Recycling and No-Waste Lunches?

Every year, we kick off the school year with a No-Waste Lunch initiative. Kids in all grades learn about the importance of Reducing, Reducing and proper Recycling. Parents can attend lunchroom information sessions. At PS 321, we emphasize the importance of packing a no-waste lunch not only for environmental reasons, but also because it maximizes time to eat during an already short lunch break (15-20 minutes.)



## We wanted to know: How are we doing?

"Green&Healthy Month has definitely made an impact," says **art teacher Rebecca Roy**, who oversees 1st grade lunch. "Children were excited to show off their healthy food. And it was also a great opportunity for me to

point out the trash-free lunches," she adds. "The voluntary recycling monitor positions at the bins at the end of every lunch period were so popular in 1st grade that we continued even after Green&Healthy Month!"

**1st Grader Rainer Nguyen-Friesen, I-230**, who volunteered as recycling monitor, agrees: "Recycling is going well, because everybody is doing it. The kids who don't know can ask the monitors. The kids who already know and the monitors remind them, they just say nicely "I know." Everybody is cooperating." Rainer points out that in general the kids with home lunch have less waste. **Catherine Douglass, Lunchroom and Salad Bar Volunteer Coordinator** sees room for improvement: "Thank you to all of the families participating in and contributing to the trash-free lunch initiative. While we have seen waste decline, we are not where we would like to be. Currently less than 50% of children bringing lunch from home have a completely trash-free lunch."

**Here are some ideas:** Use reusable containers instead of single-serve yogurts and apple sauce. Skip juice boxes and pouches, and use a reusable water-bottle instead. Reuse bags for crackers and vegetables, instead of buying single serve portions. Include utensils that can be brought back home.

The Green&Healthy Committee has created a handy click-through page of some of our favorite no-trash lunch containers and wraps. Links go straight to Amazon and a percentage of the sale will go to the school. Anyone can shop it, too -

**just click here:**

<http://ps321.org/no-trash-lunches/>.

**Eat, pack up, and be done!**



**For questions, comments and suggestions email us at: Green & Healthy: [greenandhealthy@ps321.org](mailto:greenandhealthy@ps321.org)**

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